

A

## DEFENCE

OF THE

ESTABLISHED CHURCH OF ENGLAND:

A

## SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF HEMEL HEMSTED,  
HERTFORDSHIRE,

JUNE 1, MDCCCXXXIV.

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BY THE

REV. J. H. B. MOUNTAIN, M.A.

VICAR OF HEMEL HEMSTED.

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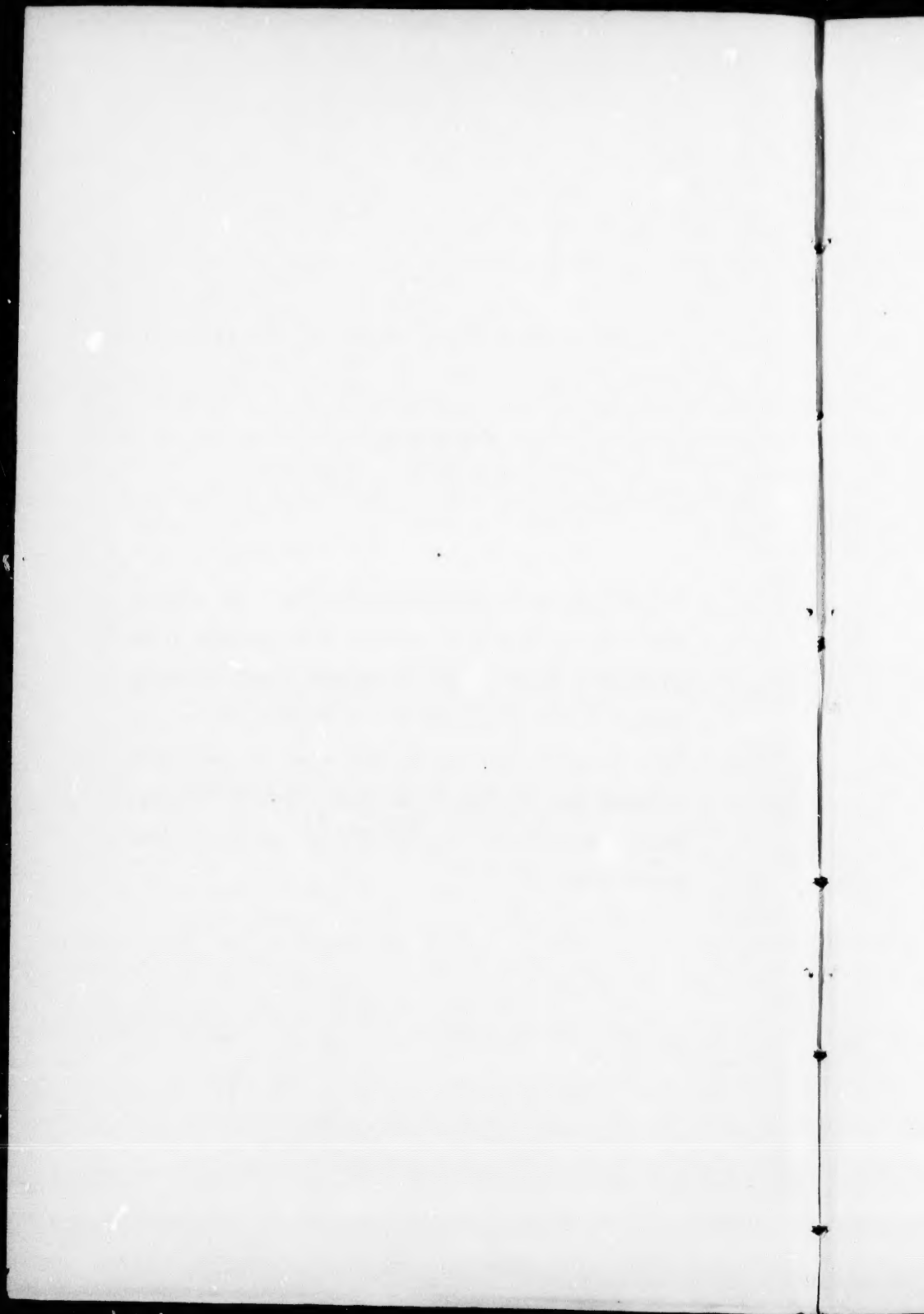
ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD, AND WATERLOO PLACE, FLEET STREET;

AND SOLD BY

MR. BUTTFIELD, HEMEL HEMSTED.

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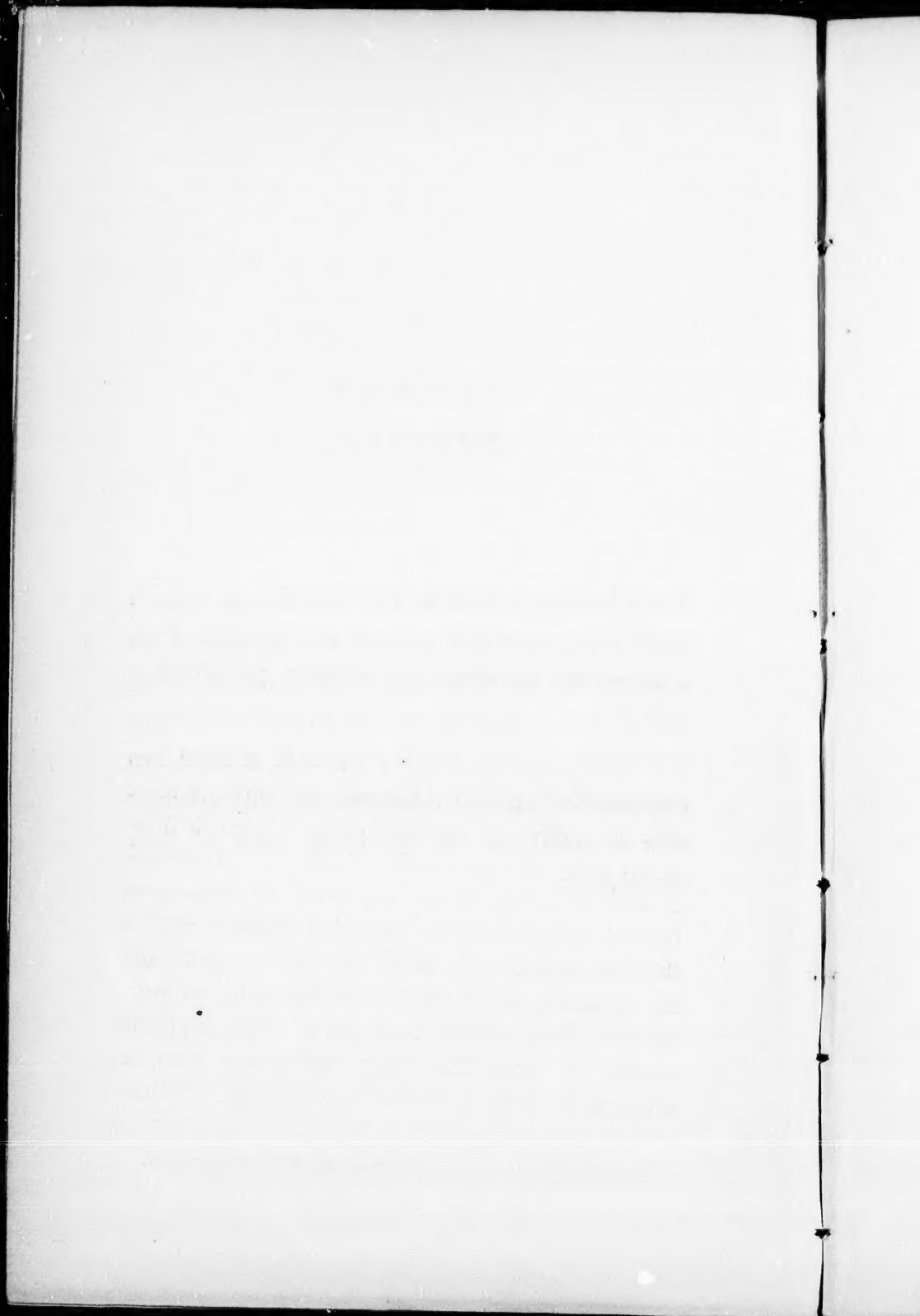
1834.



## PREFACE.

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THE following Sermon was written with no view to publication, for which purpose it is perhaps little adapted ; but the congregation who heard it having addressed a requisition to the Author, expressing their desire to print it for circulation at their own expence, he feels that it becomes his duty to accept with thankfulness this gratifying mark of their approbation.



A

## SERMON,

&c.

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MARK xii. 9.

What shall the Lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others.

I AM not aware that there has ever existed any difference of opinion respecting the interpretation of that parable of our blessed Lord of which these words form the remarkable conclusion. The same symbol of the vineyard is explained by the prophet Isaiah<sup>1</sup> to represent the temporal establishment of the Church and State under the old covenant; and the exclamation<sup>2</sup> of the Jewish hierarchy on hearing this denunciation from Jesus Christ, appears clearly to imply that they understood Him as adopting it with a similar signification: "When

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah v. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xx. 45. Luke xx. 16.

they heard it they said, God forbid!" for "they perceived that He spake of *them*." If, therefore, it be admitted that the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the national Church of Jerusalem, it will follow undeniably that our Saviour has not only sanctioned, but promised, (and may we not say *thereby directed*?) the establishment of similar institutions under the new covenant. He speaks not of throwing open the vineyard, of obliterating its limits, breaking down its fences, or dashing in pieces its tower and its wine-press: it is still to remain marked out, protected, and entrusted to husbandmen, as before, for careful cultivation, and for rendering to the landlord his dues; but it was to be given to *others*, or, in the plain terms in which He interprets it himself, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from *you*, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

That *other* race, to whom the vineyard of the Lord was to be committed, is undoubtedly the Gentile world. The Church of God was taken from the descendants of Abraham after the flesh, and given to the heirs of his faith—to the Christians: but it was still to preserve its emblematic resemblance to the vineyard, and to be established in the same manner as formerly by the protection of laws, by the appointment of a regular ministry, and by a due temporal rank and endowment; and the fruits required of it were to be the Christian graces, "judgment and righteousness," instead of

the "wild grapes," the "oppression and the cry," rendered by the former occupiers<sup>1</sup>.

The transfer of the vineyard, without the most remote allusion to any change in its circumstances, is surely a very strong presumption in favour of civil establishments of religion under the Christian dispensation.

The expediency of all such establishments is questioned, and their existence is denounced as unscriptural and unlawful by a set of persons in our time, by no means inconsiderable either for numbers or talent; and their views, in this respect, unhappily concurring with the crafty designs of unprincipled men, whose objects are the gratification of their own ambition and cupidity, there is certainly danger that, without timely and determined support on the part of her friends, the National Church in this country may speedily be deprived of all external resemblance to a walled and turreted vineyard, and so rendered incapable of affording that return which the owner looks that it should produce.

It cannot, therefore, be thought unseasonable, if the husbandmen of the vineyard look to its defences, and call on their friends for succour; they cannot be blamed, if in the hour of peril the peaceful work of cultivation should be partially suspended, whilst they are watching against incessant

<sup>1</sup> Isa. v. 4. 7.

attacks and threatened destruction. We have not deserted the work of the Gospel to march forth on foreign warfare, to impugn the title of other communions, to deny their commission, or assail their discipline and doctrine. We have waited, perhaps too long, till the battle thunders at our gates; and leaves us no longer any other choice than between a resolute, yet temperate and charitable defence, or an entire abandonment of our cause. We are not the aggressors; and we repel the aggression with no desire for "strife or vain glory."

I trust that I shall confine myself to a purely defensive line of argument, whilst, in the discharge of what appears to me, at the present crisis, a solemn duty, I endeavour to set before you the reasons for our belief, 1st, that the connection of the Church with the State is designed and ordained by our Lord Himself. 2. That the Church so established ought to be Apostolical, Episcopal, and Protestant. 3. That it consists of laymen as well as of ministers, and that the lay members of the Church are as much bound in duty to defend it, and as much interested in defending it, as their clergy.

I. With regard to the first of these topics—the connection of the Church with the State—in the absence of all direct prohibition or censure of such an union in the Word of God, we may fairly ask *on what* do our adversaries ground their confident and damnable assertions that it is at once unscriptural

tural and anti-Christian? That there is nothing unlawful in the nature of the alliance, is proved by the fact that, in the only form of government established in this world by Divine legislation, the Church was incorporated with the civil power and polity; there must, therefore, (upon their supposition) be something peculiar in the Christian religion which renders it unfit to receive that support from the institutions of society, or to infuse that spirit, and exercise that influence in the councils of princes, which religion was ordained to do under former dispensations; and it is difficult to conceive that so marked a peculiarity should have been left by the Divine Author of the Gospel without any distinct and positive notice.

On other points where the law of Jesus Christ supersedes or alters the law of Moses, our Lord's declarations of the changes to be made are plain and unequivocal; nor can we see any reason, on a question of such importance as this, for the omission of all positive instructions.

We are told, indeed, that He declared before Pilate that "His kingdom is not of this world;"—but, not to mention the strangeness of seeking for his directions respecting his Church in his brief reply to an impious idolator,—it is surely too much to infer that, because of the unquestionable and eternal truth—"the kingdom of God is not of this world,"—*therefore* the kingdoms of this world are forbidden to espouse the Church of God,—and

the Church is prohibited from being beholden to their support, and from exerting its sacred influence to make the crookedness of worldly policy straight, and the roughness of worldly contention smooth and bloodless. If we can deduce such a conclusion from such premises, it will not be difficult to make the Scriptures speak any language which may suit the interests or flatter the passions of mankind. But untenable as this position appears, I believe that it is the most plausible of all the instances adduced to prove that our blessed Lord intended to condemn, as carnal, that connection between His Church and the temporal power, which has been established in every part of the world where the Gospel has flourished.

If it be retorted upon us that our Lord has left us no direct commandment to incorporate the Church with the State, it should be recollected that a direct command is required to effect a change, not to continue things as they are; and that, the Church of Moses having been established and endowed, the Church of Christ is to remain so, unless the Founder of the new dispensation has really ordered it otherwise. It will also readily occur to every candid mind, that the circumstances in which our Saviour and his Apostles were placed would have rendered any direct declaration of an union to be effected between the Christian Church and the ruling powers of the world at that time, an avowal of revolutionary designs.

But, if it was not the will of God that the rulers of this world should support, and establish, and endow His Church, in what sense does the Holy Spirit promise to that Church, "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers <sup>1</sup>?" In what sense does He declare, "Ye shall be named the priests of the Lord: men shall call you the ministers of our God; ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves: for your shame you shall have double, and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion; therefore in their land they shall possess the double; everlasting joy shall be unto them: for I the Lord love judgment: I hate robbery for a burnt-offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them <sup>2</sup>."

I am aware that many persons regard these, and other similar promises contained in the prophecies, as referring to the temporal restoration of Israel, and the conversion of the Jews; but, even if this secondary acceptation be admitted, it will not exclude the sense in which the promises have generally been received by the Christian Church in all ages, as announcing to her that dignity and independence of outward circumstances, which has enabled her to controul spiritual wickedness in high places, to influence the whole frame of civi-

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xlix. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. lxi. 6, &c.

lized society, and to diffuse the blessings of charity throughout the habitable globe.

My limits preclude me from entering further into the discussion of this part of the question, and oblige me to leave unnoticed many declarations of the Scriptures from which the same conclusions might readily be drawn. And I purposely pass over the obvious, and, I think, the unanswerable argument, that the State owes to its subjects the same duties, on a larger scale, which parents owe to their children; the first of which, in importance, is to provide them with sound religious and moral instruction, and to guard them against erroneous opinions and false principles;—and how can this be done, without the establishment of a National Church?

The contrary system involves the impracticable attempt to frame our public and our private character upon different, and, indeed, opposite principles: to be Christians in the closet, and heathens in the senate; to be churchmen at home, and latitudinarians abroad; to be just, and pure, and charitable in our individual capacity, but to adopt the practice of the world in our social relations; to serve God when alone, but to cast off His fear and renounce His faith in the arduous discharge of our most conspicuous and important duties.

II. But if it be the will of God that the government of a Christian community should be Christian in its constitution, in other words, that there should

be an Established Church, it will hardly be denied that the discipline and doctrine of that Church must be framed entirely according to Divine Revelation, and in no respect accommodated to secular interests. The Church must be *Apostolical*. Its Ministers must derive their commission and authority from a spiritual Head; and they must prove that commission, they must exhibit that authority, *not* by the gratuitous assertion of an inward call to preach the Gospel, of which there can be no means to ascertain the genuineness or sincerity; but by the ordination of a competent authority, empowering them to teach in the Church and to administer its ordinances. The argument of St. Paul on this head is conclusive. No man is to take this office on himself, but he who is called of God, as was Aaron<sup>1</sup>. Now, although no one will presume to doubt that Aaron was inspired by the Holy Ghost, it is remarkable that his inward call is passed over in silence, and mention is made only of his formal appointment and consecration<sup>2</sup>; and yet this is the call and the ordination to which the Apostle refers as the indispensable pattern for a Christian Ministry. The necessity of a conscientious conviction is not questioned; the offence of counterfeiting it is not palliated: but surely the essential requisite of a regular commission can scarcely be more unequivocally pointed out than

<sup>1</sup> Heb. v. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xl. 12, &c.

in this comparison to the *hereditary* priesthood of Aaron.

But, if a Minister must be ordained by some lawful and competent authority to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments, where is that authority? An ambassador must produce his credentials; a messenger must show his token; "How shall they preach," St. Paul asks<sup>1</sup>, "except they be sent;" and, in this case, who will presume to send ambassadors in the name of the King of kings, or messengers from the Divine Head of the Church! Certainly, unless we can prove an outward and visible commission, derived directly from Him, we have no claim to become His Ministers.

If the mere profession of an inward call be insufficient, it is at least equally clear that no authority can be derived from those who possess none themselves; and, consequently, that no ordination to the Ministry can be valid, which is not clearly traceable up to the Apostles, and, through them, to the Lord Jesus Christ. No human government, still less the mere will or caprice of individuals, could ever originate or confer such a commission, nor justify its assumption.

That the original constitution of the Apostolic Church was *Episcopal*; that the three orders of the Clergy—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, were established at the first settlement of a Christian

<sup>1</sup> Rom. x. 15.

ecclesiastical polity; that this constitution was universal in the Church, as long as it retained any remnant of its primitive purity; and that it is most strenuously insisted on by the Fathers and Martyrs, who were contemporary<sup>1</sup> with the Apostles of our Lord, are facts so indisputable, that learned Divines and candid reasoners of other communions have generally admitted them, and have been content to make the best of their cause under the weight of that admission. With cavillers, who resort to the expedient of impugning the genuineness of every book, or, where that is impossible, of every passage which militates against their opinions, it is never worth while to hold any argument.

I would not be understood to infer that, where the Episcopal authority has been vested, as it is in the Church of Scotland, in the hands of an Assembly, the title to Apostolical succession in the Ministry is thereby vitiated; but such a departure from the original constitution of the Church was deeply deplored by many of those pious Reformers who, whilst they felt themselves compelled to admit it by the necessity of the times, congratulated, in warm terms, those happier Churches which were enabled to resume the Apostolic pattern, disentangled from the strange excrescences of Papal corruption. For the Romish Church had intro-

<sup>1</sup> See particularly the Seven Epistles of Ignatius, usually admitted to be genuine.

duced seven orders of the Ministry, and rendered the whole system of the hierarchy a compound of tyranny and superstition ; preserving little that was valuable, excepting the unquestioned succession of its Ministry from the first Apostles.

On this head it is not necessary for me to enlarge. Policy and truth equally demand that the Established Church should be strictly and purely *Protestant* : policy, because the Church of Rome usurps an undue power over kings and laws, or, where that is resisted, stimulates the people to rebellion and outrage ; Truth, because all the great doctrines of the Gospel are so weakened and perverted by her traditions as to render them of no effect, incapable of converting the infidel, insufficient to guide the believer in the way of salvation. The worship of creatures, the invocation of secondary Mediators, and the reliance on meritorious works, are among the fatal errors which darken, to her, the light of grace, degrade the office, and undervalue the atonement of the Redeemer, and obscure the great doctrine of justification by faith.

III. That Church, in the pride and plenitude of ecclesiastical power, appears to have forgotten altogether the claims and rights of the laity, and to regard them as forming no part of the body of Christ, occupying no station in the household of God, constituting no order in the assembly of His people. And yet it is remarkable that this oppressed, and degraded, and despised laity, look up

to their clergy with enthusiastic attachment and veneration, obey them with the most implicit submission, and defend their enormous encroachments upon the liberties and property of their flocks, with undaunted and pertinacious zeal; whilst the Church of England, whose clergy must be acknowledged to be, comparatively at least, moderate in their claims both of authority and revenue, has too often reason to adopt the melancholy expostulation of the prophet<sup>1</sup>:—"There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that take her by the hand, of all the sons whom she hath brought up;" as if the affections of mankind were secured by exaction and oppression, and alienated by modesty and gentleness.

With us, the laity<sup>2</sup> are justly considered as forming the great body of the Church, and as entitled to a legitimate share in its government and privileges. We, the ministers of the Church, are the leaders and guides, but not the owners nor masters of the flock; we desire no more authority than is conducive to *your* edification, no more rank than is necessary to maintain a salutary influence, no more wealth than is indispensable to the independence becoming Christian teachers, and moderately affording to us the means of hospitality

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah li. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Lay* is the passive participle from *lead*. The *laity* are the *led*, not, as Horne Tooke has maliciously construed it, the *mised*.

and charity. We “desire not *yours*, but *you* :” we instruct you, “not as having dominion over your faith, but as helpers of your joy ;” we would enforce discipline itself rather in the spirit of brotherly entreatment than of severe rebuke ; and we value the Church, of which we are fellow-members with yourselves, more for *your* sake than for our own : we value it as affording the most effectual means for *your* conversion, the purest system for *your* instruction, the holiest ordinances for *your* consolation, the noblest hopes of *your* salvation ; and we call upon you to defend the establishment of the Church, not as if you were contending for the existence or the prosperity of a small privileged class, but with the conviction that you are bound by the highest ties and the holiest duties to maintain that sacred body, of which you are as essential and as honoured members as we are. You owe it to yourselves, to your children, to generations yet unborn, to the souls of all mankind, to the cause of God’s eternal truth, to preserve inviolate the purest branch of His blessed Son’s Church on earth. Or, if not,—if our claim rests on any lower ground,—abandon it at once, and suffer not your consideration for a few obscure individuals to interfere with the dazzling prospects held out to you by those who thirst for the confiscation of our property, and the degradation of our persons.

Let us be one body, animated by one spirit, feeling a common interest, and making all things sub-

servient to the same glorious hope ; and when you speak of the Church as a temporal establishment, confine not your ideas to the hierarchy or the clergy, but embrace in your consideration that vast body of Protestant episcopal Christians, led by an apostolical ministry, who form,—and, if they rightly understand their own situation, and estimate their own resources, will continue to form—the Established Church of England.

My brethren, these are not the topics on which I love to address you. The delight of every faithful minister of the Gospel is to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified ; and he would gladly leave the defence of the establishment and temporalities of the Church in the hands of those who will generally be deemed its more disinterested advocates. It is painful to assert our own authority, and to demonstrate our own value. St. Paul complained that he was forced, by the cold indifference of his flock, to commend himself ; and it is with something of the same feeling that we are reluctantly drawn into a controversy wherein our own honour and interest are so deeply concerned ; but, at the present moment, we have no choice. Woe to the timid equivocator who can now hesitate to come forward in the defence of his principles ;—I say, in the *defence*, for, be it observed, we have neither sought the contest, nor can we escape from it on any easier terms than the total abandonment of every point in dispute. The struggle is for the existence of an

established religion, and no compromise can be effected or hoped.

And let it be remembered, that since the contest is purely defensive on our part, it may be maintained, and, I trust, it will be maintained in a purely defensive spirit, without bitterness, without animosity, without any desire of retaliation. Let us, wherever it is possible, give our opponents credit for sincerity and good intention; and where their conduct renders this supposition vain, let us hope that they may be converted, and pray that they may be forgiven.

Let our *anxiety* be for our *conduct* in the struggle, not for its *result*. If it please God further to chastise our offences, and the sins of this nation, by "taking away the hedge of his vineyard, that it may be eaten up, and breaking down the wall thereof, that it may be trodden down<sup>1</sup>," be assured that His wisdom and goodness will sanctify even this heavy affliction to the salvation of His faithful servants, the trial of whose faith worketh patience, and whose humble patience shall, in due time, reap a rich reward, IF THEY FAINT NOT. Or, if it be His gracious will to hear our prayers, and to avert the evils which threaten us, let us not indulge in exultation, but be mindful that our escape is to be ascribed to *His* sparing mercy, not to *our* innocence; let us acknowledge, with heartfelt humility,

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah v. 5.

that we have deserved infinitely more than the worst of our enemies could desire to inflict upon us ; and, bowing before His footstool in lowly thankfulness, repose our trust in *His* unfailing promises,—“ When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel<sup>1</sup>. ”

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xliii. 2, 3.

THE END.